AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF E-SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ON E-WOM OF SELECTED E-COMMERCE COMPANIES.

A Synopsis

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2. Introduction

For the American Marketing Association, services are "activities, advantages, and enjoyment that are provided for sale or delivered in connection with the sale of products" (AMA). The standardisation of business procedures and service provision is a direct effect of technology development. The approach of assessing service quality is grounded on the four distinguishing characteristics of services: intangibility, inseparability, perishability, and heterogeneity (Buttle, 1993; Zeithaml, 1996; Moeller, 2010; Laudien and Pesch, 2018). Intangible services are those that cannot be physically received but rather are felt in the heart or mind. Services are difficult to value since there are no universally accepted metrics by which they can be evaluated. When a service's development and consumption occur simultaneously, we call it "integral" (Buttle, 1993). The components of a service are perishable if they cannot be saved for subsequent use (Gronroos, 19393; Moeller, 2010). Services given are of widely varying quality. It changes every day and among different groups of individuals (Becker, 1996). These shifts may come from the same source at different periods, or they may come from many different sources at once. Accordingly, offering a wide range of options to choose from is the single most important factor in building solid customer service.

Services are exceptional because of their indefinability, interdependence, short shelf life, and variety (Buttle, 1993; Zeithaml, 1996; Moeller, 2010; Laudien and Pesch, 2018). Services are intangible as they cannot be seen or touched like automobiles or even paper money. Services are hard to evaluate since there are no universally accepted metrics for them. Providing and receiving the service occur simultaneously, thus the term "inseparability" (Buttle, 1993). If the results of a service can't be preserved and used again, we classify it as a perishable service (Gronroos, 19393; Moeller, 2010). The level of service provided varies significantly from one instance to the next. It varies greatly from day to day and group to group (Becker, 1996). The upgrade might be sent out gradually by the same provider, or it could happen simultaneously by a number of different ones. Therefore, diversity is the single most important factor in determining a service's quality.

One may get a greater variety of items from a single e-retailer, save money because of price competition, and have an easier time with returns while shopping online. Online stores originally aimed on city inhabitants. Similarly, city dwellers were early adopters of E-commerce (Rai, 2018). We all know that consumers in urban areas who like internet shopping appreciate the ability to do it from their mobile devices (Pham et al., 2018). Even yet, considering that 75%+ of India's population lives outside of metro areas, there is huge untapped potential for E-commerce in these regions (Census, 2011).

E-retailing is shorthand for "electronic retailing." To do business nowadays requires an internet connection. Business-to-consumer and other types of sales are included. In contrast to the other

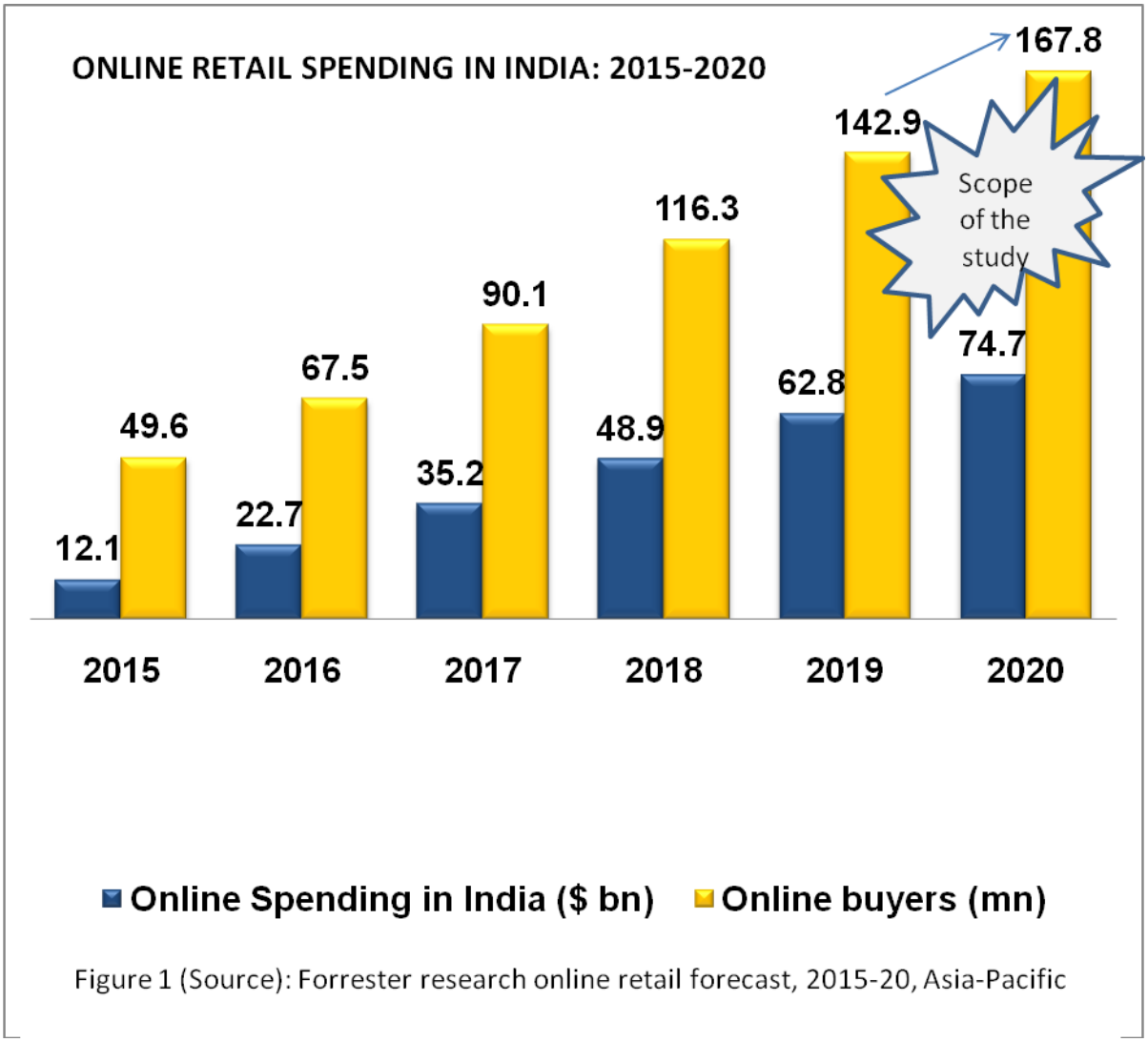

Figure 1 (Source): Forrester research online retail forecast, 2015-20, Asia-Pacific

two types of E-commerce, which are both entirely or mostly conducted online, E-commerce also includes brick-and-mortar establishments that have an online presence (sometimes known as "click-and-mortar" stores) (Chen et al., 2004).

The web technology like online communication, purchase and delivery of products/services are measured by quality of services (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). There are a wide variety of models

available for determining how well a service fulfils its advertised functions. Reason enough for many companies to prioritise customer satisfaction and retention (Gazor et al, 2012). Parasuraman et al. (1988) created the SERVQUAL model to evaluate clients' wants and preferences. .

Authentic customer feedback shared in internet reviews is quite helpful when making a final decision (Cheung & Lee, 2012). The internet's quick growth in terms of word of mouth may be attributable to the anonymity and diversity of content accessible on the internet. What distinguishes E-WOM unique from more conventional forms of advertising is the two-way feedback mechanism between E-WOM and sales (Duan, Gu, & Washington, 2008). As a result of using this strategy, sales have been shown to rise.

The fast expansion of high-speed internet and the widespread use of smartphones in India's tier-2 and tier-3 cities have likely contributed significantly to the industry's meteoric rise in recent years. Recent government initiatives for digital economy and E-governance, such as E-panchayats, BharatNet, Internet Saathi (an initiative by Google and Tata Trust to increase internet penetration among rural women), and the Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) mobile-based platform for digital payments, have all contributed to the expansion of the E-commerce sector.

3. Literature Review

As the technology behind online transactions improves, consumers are beginning to choose it over in-store purchases. The provision of services over the Internet has developed into a distinct industry in recent years. The majority of businesses now exist only online, and as a consequence, the criteria used to evaluate their success in this sector have also changed. Because of this study, the phrase "E-service quality" was created. The quality of E-services may be measured using a number of different scales, some of which have been designed specifically for this purpose. These include E- SERVQUAL, the WebQual Model, SiteQual, E-TailQ, and the E-S-Qual scale. We'll go further into these E-service ranking systems below.

According to the gap theory, there is a major discrepancy between the advertised and actual quality of customer service (Parasuraman et al., 1985). To learn more about the gap between expectations and delivery, we queried respondents on their level of satisfaction with the service they received (Parasuraman et al., 1990). They discovered five areas where services fell short: in how well they were expected to perform, how managers rated their own performance, how well services were really delivered, and how well they delivered on commitments to customers.

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The 22 items that make up the E-S-Qual scale were established by Parasuraman et al. (2005), and they are grouped into four constructs: efficiency, contentment, availability, and privacy. The Rec-SQUAL scale was created by Parasuraman et al. (2005) and consists of eleven measures divided into three categories: responsiveness, compensation, and interaction. In order to determine what constitutes a high-quality E-service, the PZM framework looks at four primary factors:

(1) Efficiency is ease and speed of website accessing.

(2) Fulfillment is about the satisfaction of website promises and order delivery.

(3) System availability is theadequate technical functions of the site.

(4) Privacy is the extent to which the site is secure and safe guards customer’s information.

PZM framework's contribution is particularly helpful in linking and authenticating the e-servqual concept, which is why it is seen as more powerful.

High-quality E-services help online retailers succeed in a number of ways, including their efficiency, completeness, accessibility, security, receptiveness, payment, benefits, communication, knowledge, and presentation (Kim, and Lennon; 2006).

To put a price on a website's services, Loionoco et al. (2007) developed the WebQual model. In addition, the research analysed how customers' impressions of a website's features affected their behaviours. The WebQual Model helped them narrow down the options to only 12.

One of the studies done to evaluate Taiwanese auction sites is one conducted by Liu et al. The authors created the OA-SQ model to evaluate online auction sites based on criteria including safety, practicality, attractiveness, customisation, fun, user friendliness, affordability, and accessibility (OA-SQ).

Easy accessibility, adaptability, and dependability are the three hallmarks of high-quality E-services identified by Gera's (2011) review of data from frequent Internet users.

The E-service recovery quality scale was created by Sabiote and Roman (2012) via research that focused on the concepts of usability, data, dependability, security, and privacy, as well as the recovery of individual customers.

The SNSQUAL model was developed by Philips et al. (2016) with a number of factors, including ease of use, credibility, adaptability, integration, and dependability, among others.

Mishra's (2018) analysis of E-service quality is based mostly on two factors: effectiveness and customer gratification. Further, he examined how online customer service affects customers' perceptions of a product's worth and their loyalty to a certain company.

Both Janita and Miranda conducted research on the official Spanish government website (2018). For each of these four factors—information, technological efficacy, privacy, and communication—he assigned a ranking.

When making a major purchase, consumers nowadays are less likely to rely on personal recommendations or marketing and more likely to seek out and rely on internet reviews. Many consumers now place as much faith in customer evaluations posted on independent websites as they do in those found on major brands' own domains (AC Nielson, 2007).

There is considerable debate over whether or not the Internet is the ideal medium for propagating WOM, as stated by Buttle (1998), which was cited by Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008).

Furthermore, he said that the proliferation of viral marketing strategies used by an ever-increasing number of organisations had muddied the line between promotional messages and word-of-mouth by saying that "informal communications" were inadequately all-encompassing (Lindgreen & Vanhamme, 2005).

E-commerce has shown the importance of E-WOM, or electronic word of mouth, in modern business. Multiple platforms, such as a company's website, blog, social media, and customer rating systems, are used by customers to learn about, interact with, and share information about a company (Khan & Hashmi, 2016). It's no surprise that the Internet has become the de facto standard for sharing and collecting data by customers. Numbers collected by Labsomboonsiri et al (2017).

It's generally agreed that review articles placed online may be helpful for certain individuals. Sometimes a customer may leave for no other reason than some negative feedback. And this is why E-WOM is considered such a serious problem by most companies. Long-term success depends on hearing from as many customers as possible, so they may reach out to existing ones on their own initiative.

Consumers seek out and accept the E-WOM advice because they want to reduce their exposure to risk and overcome any preconceived unfavourable attitudes they may have about the product or service. In fact, this has been shown to be the case (Chen, 2006; Smith, Coyle, Lightfoot, & Scott, 2007).

Based on the findings, it is clear that E-WOM is the most efficient non-commercial route of communication for spreading word about a service or product. There has been an uptick in the number of Indian residents who report never setting foot in a physical store due to their preference for online shopping, sparking an academic interest in the topic. Yet, in the case of Indian e-commerce websites, there has not been nearly enough academic study on this issue. This result prompted the research into determining ways to evaluate the veracity of "E-WOM message. .

Table 1: E-Service Quality Constructs

Researchers	**Constructs**	**Scale/Model**
Yoo and Donthu (2001)	Ease of use, aesthetic design, processing speed, security	SITEQUAL for internet shopping websites

Van Reil et al. (2001)	Core Service, Supporting services, User interface	E-service quality of portal sites and assess the overall development of e-loyalty
Loiacono et al. (2002)	Informational fit-to-ask, Tailored communications, Trust, Response time, Ease of understanding, Intuitive operations, Visual appeal, Innovativeness, Emotional appeal, Consistent image, Online completeness, Relative advantage	WebQual for e-business web portals
Leander et al. (2002)	User Interface, Responsiveness, Reliability, Customization/Personalization, and Trust	E-service quality of recruitment portal
Zeithaml et al. (2002)	Efficiency, Reliability, Fulfillment, Privacy, Responsiveness, Compensation, Contact	e-SERVQUAL, e-shopping websites
Santos (2003)	Ease of use, Appearance, Linkage, Layout, Content, Reliability, Efficiency, Support, Incentive, Communication, Security	E-service quality of online shopping websites
Kim and Stoel (2004)	Web appearance, Entertainment, Information, Transaction capability, Responsiveness, Trust	Retailing through websites
Gounaris et al. (2005)	Web site design, Information, Trust, Responsiveness, Reputation	Retailing through websites

Parasuraman et al. (2005)	Efficiency, Fulfillment, System availability, Privacy	e-shopping scale from departmental stores
Kim et al. (2006)	Efficiency, Fulfillment, System availability Responsiveness, Compensation, Information, Graphic style	Retailing through websites
Park et al. (2007)	Ease of use, Information, Security, Responsiveness, Fulfillment	Website quality of online travel agencies
Sabiote and Roman (2012)	Functionality, Information, Reliability/fulfillment, Privacy/Security, Customer recovery	Quality scale for E-service recovery
Philips et al. (2016)	Ease of use, Trustworthiness, Personalization, Integration, Reliability	SNSQUAL for assessing the quality of social networking sites
Janita and Miranda (2018)	Quality of information, Technical efficiency, Privacy, Communication	Quality of government E-services
Mishra (2018)	Efficiency and Fulfillment	E-service quality
Lee and Rabjohn (2008)	Trustworthiness, Consumer purchase decision,Reliability	e-SERVQUAL, e-shopping websites
Park, Wang, Yao, and Kang (2011)	Believable, True, Factual, Quality of information	e-WOM

Table 2: E-service quality Indian Study

Researchers	**Dimensions**	**Study Focus**
Gera (2011)	Ease of access, Flexibility, Reliability	General website users
Kandulapatu and Bellamkonda (2014)	Efficiency, Fulfillment, Privacy, System availability, E-service Quality, Service value	Online shoppers in India
Agrawal, Tripathi, and Seth (2014)	Responsiveness, Reliability, Ease of use, Customization, Security and Trust, Web aesthetic, Efficiency, Contact, Fulfillment	E-service quality in the banking industry
Dubey and Srivastava (2016)	Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy	A study on the telecom sector in India
Ahmad and Khan (2017)	Ease of access, Empathy, Reliability, Information, Quality	Website service quality scale
Katta and Patro (2017)	Web functionality, Product variety, Innovativeness, Personalization, convenience, Reliability, Security & Privacy, Delivery, Financial advantage	Website features of E-retailers

Table 3: Summary of Important Constructs Identified by Previous Researchers

Dimensions	**Author(s) (worked on service quality)**	**Author(s) (worked on E-service quality)**
Efficiency	Parasuraman et al. (1998, 1992); Cronin and Taylor (1992. 1994); Dubey and Srivastava (2016)	Parasuraman et al. (2005) (PZM) and Wolfinbarger and Gilly(2003); Kandulapatu and Bellamkonda (2014)
Fulfillment	Parasuraman et al. (1985); Parasuraman et al. (1998, 1992); Cronin and Taylor (1992. 1994); Dabholkar et al. (1996)	Mishra (2018) and Parasuraman et al. (2005) (PZM); Kumari and Rani (2011); Khare (2011); Dubey and Srivastava (2016); Kandulapatu and Bellamkonda (2014)
System Availability	Parasuraman et al. (1985); Parasuraman et al. (1998, 1992); Cronin and Taylor (1992. 1994); Yang (2001) Dubey and Srivastava (2016)	Kandulapatu and Bellamkonda (2014) and Parasuraman et al. (2005) (PZM)
Trust	Parasuraman et al. (1998, 1992); Cronin and Taylor (1992. 1994); Zeithaml et al. (2000)	Loiacono, Watson, and Goodhue (2000); Lijander et al. (2002); Saleem and Adil (2014); Phillps et al. (2016); Sundaram et al. (2017)
Privacy	Parasuraman et al. (1985); Yang (2001); Gronroos (1982)	Zeithaml et al. (2000); Szymanski and Hise (2000); Yoo and Donthu (2001); Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003); Santos (2003); Parasuraman et al. (2005);

		Connolly et al. (2010); Agrawal et al. (2014); Katta and Patro (2017); Kandulapatu and Bellamkonda (2014)
Loyalty	Khare (2011); Hosseini et al. (2013); Valaei et al. (2016)	Dubey, A., & Srivastava, A. K. (2016) and Zeithmal et al. (1996)
E-WOM		Buttle (1998), Berger (2014), Goyette et al. (2010), Fan et al. (2015)

3.1 Research Gaps

1. It has been observed that E-service quality and customer satisfaction were the areas of previous studies in respect of website quality, e-business service, and only E-retailers website quality. Very fewer works has been done on particularly E-service quality of E-retailers.
2. Developed economies were the target population for existing studies on E-service quality in the online retail sector. Very less work has been done in developing economies, which comprehensively investigates the E-service quality of e-retail sectors in India, particularly.
3. As per the best knowledge of the researcher (through Google, Proquest) has lot of potential for e-WOM (e- word-of-mouth) and referrals about service quality which has not been explored yet.

3.2 The rationale of the study

The internet has changed from a means of communication to a medium for advertising in recent years. Customers now have an easier time browsing for, comparing, and purchasing from various online stores. In addition, more and more customers are sharing their thoughts about online stores' services through social media marketing. Online stores

are increasingly focusing their marketing efforts on social media platforms due to the large number of prospective customers in these communities (Kim and Lennon, 2013).

Many academic investigations have measured the effect that e-security has on service quality and customer satisfaction, and shoppers are becoming more wary about the security of shopping websites (Zeithaml et al., 2002; Liao et al., 2006; Pizam, 2013). Understanding how e-security measures impact service quality is crucial for every online retailer.

Online shoppers appreciate the opportunity to save both time and money by making their purchases from the comfort of their own homes. There are many additional ways in which online buying is more efficient. Stores that don't provide online shopping or delivery services are currently in the minority.

A key factor in the continued success of e-retailing is the improvement of E-service quality provided by E-retailers, which in turn motivates consumers to continue shopping with the firm. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to get insight into how consumers rate the satisfaction, reliability, and commitment of their online experiences. As such, trust and loyalty are also crucial to grasping e-WOM. It is necessary to conduct frequent surveys to acquire relevant data in order to stay up with the ever-evolving expectations for the quality and satisfaction of E-services.

Acquiring new customers over the Internet is now very challenging due to the complexity of consumer behaviour (Jain and Sareen, 2015). Developing trust and advocacy for a brand requires a deeper understanding of what makes customers happy after using a service.

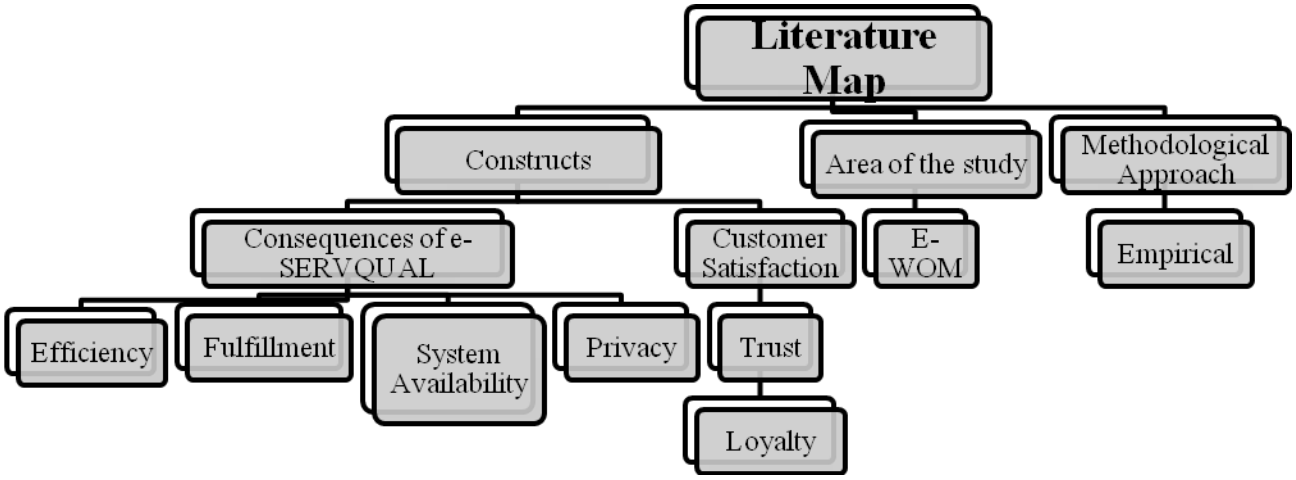

Figure 2: Literature Map

4. Research Objectives

- Previous researchers have examined the available literature in an effort to assess customer satisfaction with E-service quality and related features of Indian E-retailers.
    - To study the nature of relationships amongst identified variables (antecedents and consequents variables of E-service quality and customer satisfaction).
    - To measure the customer satisfaction on shopping patterns, including selected product categories (e.g., electronic goods, books, shoes, apparels, etc.) by preferred E-retailers.

- To analyze the trust and loyalty of Indian consumers based on demographic characteristics for the e-servqual constructs to e-retail stores working in India.

➢ To suggest managerial implications for marketers to get insights about the e-WOM, theoretical implications for academicians, and future research directions for researchers.

4.1 Conceptual Framework

The aforementioned research model has been presented following careful assessment of the existing literature and the stated aims of the inquiry (Figure 3). (Figure 3). This model examines the aspects that have an influence on e-SERVQUAL and customer satisfaction for Indian online businesses. An effort is being made to assess trust, loyalty, and e-WOM (word-of-mouth) of customers by examining some key characteristics of E-service quality and customer satisfaction.

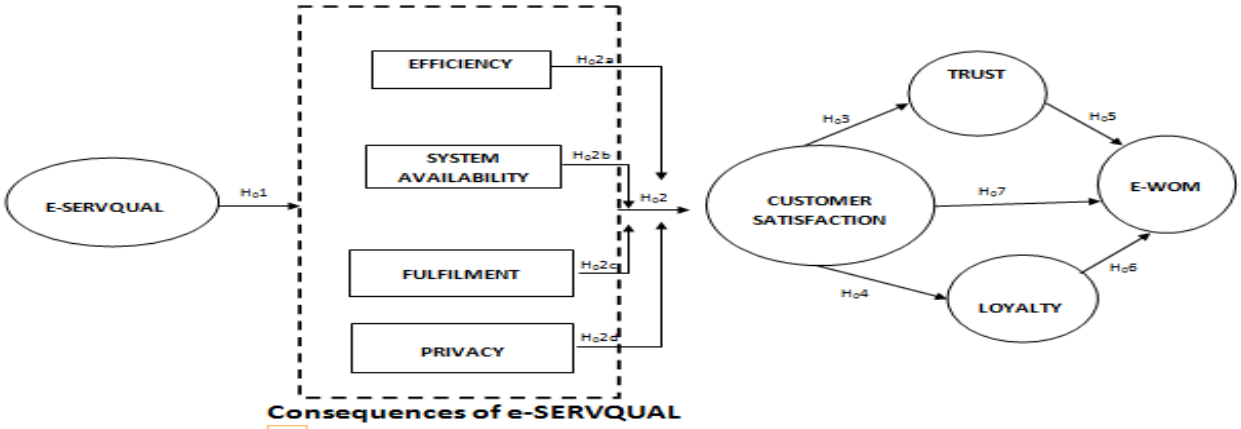

Figure 3: Proposed Research Model

4.2 Hypotheses Development

H_0: The e-SERVQUAL does not have a statistically significant influence on the total e-service quality of E-retailers.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. The Study- The study will be empirical in nature

5.2 Sampling Design

5.2.1. Population: The population of the study will be the customers of e-retail stores of India.

5.2.2. Sample Size: According to the rule of thumb for confidence interval sample selection for the proposed questionnaire, the researcher would pick 450 participants from all across India, with 5 observations taken for each construct.

5.2.3 Sample Element: The sampling element will be the individual e-respondents.

5.2.4 Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling method will be used for collecting data.

5.3 Survey Instruments

TABLE 4: CONSTRUCTS AND SOURCES

S.No.	Construct	Source
1.	E-SERVQUAL	Parasuraman et al. (2005) (PZM)
2.	Efficiency	Parasuraman et al. (2005) (PZM) and Wolfinbarger and Gilly(2003)
3.	System Availability	Kandulapatu and Bellamkonda (2014) and Parasuraman et al. (2005) (PZM)
4.	Fulfillment	Mishra (2018) and Parasuraman et al. (2005) (PZM)
5.	Privacy	Katta and Patro (2017) and Parasuraman et al. (2005) (PZM)

6.	Customer Satisfaction	Cronin, J.J., Brady, M.K. and Hult, G.T.M. (2000)
7.	Trust	Loiacono, Watson, and Goodhue (2000); Lijander et al. (2002); Sundaram et al. (2017)
8.	Loyalty	Dubey, A., & Srivastava, A. K. (2016) and Zeithmal et al. (1996)
9.	E-WOM	Buttle (1998), Berger (2014), Goyette et al. (2010), Fan et al. (2015)

5.4 Instruments for Data Collection

Standardized Questionnaires will be utilized for collecting data.

5.5 Tools for Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to examine the data. The data will be analysed using primary data analysis software, such as IBM SPSS, SMART PLS, and the following tools.

1. Test of Reliability
2. Test of Validity
3. Descriptive Statistics
4. Exploratory Factor Analysis
5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis
6. Structural Equation Modeling

6. Expected outcomes of the proposed study

The proposed research will make significant contributions to the development of a more accurate scale for assessing the quality of E-services offered by Indian online retailers. Since the functioning of e-retailer services in India is not significantly different to that in industrialised countries, the suggested study might benefit many stakeholders worldwide.

Incorporating customer feedback into the creation of new services and products is one way in which business leaders may reap the rewards of e-WOM. The professor may better prepare their students for the future by studying and teaching in a burgeoning subject, where they can use their newfound knowledge to provide case studies and insights. The proposed paths for further study will help researchers in the future add even more frameworks to their understanding of the issue.

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Annexure:

Proposed Chapter Scheme

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Literature Review
- Chapter 3: Research Methodology
- Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion
- Chapter 5: Conclusion and Future Directions.